

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Withdrawn) A running sandal for receiving a foot of a wearer, the foot having a heel area, an instep area, and a forefoot area, the sandal comprising:
 - a flexible midsole comprising a heel portion, an arch portion, and a forefoot portion, the midsole having an upper surface that supports the wearer's foot;
 - a strap keeper attached to the midsole and positioned adjacent to the upper surface;
 - a curved forefoot plate connected to the forefoot portion of the midsole, the curved forefoot plate having a partially concave shape and a stiffness greater than a stiffness of the midsole, the curved forefoot plate has an integral flex groove therein, the flex groove extending substantially laterally relative to the midsole;
 - an outsole attached to the midsole; and
 - a sandal strap system comprising:
 - a heel strap coupled to the midsole and configured to engage the heel area of the wearer's foot;
 - an instep strap coupled to the midsole and configured to engage the instep area of the wearer's foot; and
 - a forefoot strap coupled to the midsole and configured to engage the forefoot area of the wearer's foot; and
 - an adjustment strap attached to the heel strap, extending through the strap keeper, and connected to an adjustment member, wherein the adjustment strap is adjustable at the adjustment member to simultaneously adjust the position of the heel strap, and the forefoot strap relative to the wearer's foot to tighten or loosen the strap system.

2. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 wherein the midsole assembly further includes a toe guard.

3. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 wherein the adjustment member is connected to the forefoot strap.

4. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 wherein the midsole is made of a first material, and further comprising a shock-absorbing pad made of a second material different from the first material, wherein the shock-absorbing pad is positioned to dampen and absorb impact loads from the heel area of the wearer's foot.

5. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 wherein the midsole is made of a first material, and further comprising an energy-returning pad made of a second material different from the first material, wherein the energy-returning pad is positioned for transferring energy in an area under the wearer's forefoot area.

6. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 wherein the midsole is made of a first material, wherein the curved forefoot plate is made of a second material different from the first, and further comprising:

a shock-absorbing pad made of a third material different from the first and second materials, wherein the shock-absorbing pad is positioned to dampen and absorb impact loads from the heel area of the wearer's foot; and
an energy-returning pad made of a fourth material different from the first, second, and third materials, wherein the energy-returning pad is positioned for transferring energy in an area under the wearer's forefoot area.

7. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 wherein the curved forefoot plate is sandwiched between the midsole and the outsole.

8. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 wherein the curved forefoot plate is embedded within the midsole.

9. (Withdrawn) The running sandal of claim 1 further comprising a stabilizing arch support.

10. (Amended) A midsole assembly for a running sandal configured to receive a foot of a wearer, the midsole assembly comprising:

a flexible midsole body having a heel portion, an arch portion, and a forefoot portion, the midsole body having a footbed surface that supports the foot of the wearer; and

a curved forefoot plate connected to the forefoot portion of the flexible midsole body, wherein the curved forefoot plate at the forefoot portion has a partially concave shape and a stiffness greater than the stiffness of the midsole body, and wherein the curved forefoot plate has an integral flexible portion extending substantially between a lateral and medial side of the curved forefoot plate when the sandal is assembled.

11. (Original) The midsole assembly of claim 10 wherein the curved forefoot plate is seated within a recessed area formed in the midsole body.

12. (Original) The midsole assembly of claim 10 wherein the integral flexible portion of the curved forefoot plate includes a flex groove.

13. (Original) The midsole assembly of claim 10 wherein the midsole body is made of a first material and where the curved forefoot plate is made of a second material that is less flexible than the first material.

14. (Original) The midsole assembly of claim 10 wherein the curved forefoot plate includes an integral central stiffening rib extending longitudinally.

15. (Original) The midsole assembly of claim 10 wherein the curved forefoot plate includes integral outer stiffening ribs extending longitudinally.

16. (Original) The midsole assembly of claim 10 wherein the curved forefoot plate includes side tabs that seat within a correspondingly shaped shallow cavity formed in the midsole body.

17. (Withdrawn) The midsole assembly of claim 10 wherein a sandal upper configured as a sandal strap system extends from the footbed surface, and wherein the sandal upper comprises:

- a strap keeper attached to the midsole assembly and positioned adjacent to the foot supporting surface;

- an inner strap assembly comprising a heel strap, a forefoot strap, and an instep strap, wherein the inner strap assembly is fixed to the midsole assembly and includes keeper tabs; and

- an outer strap assembly coupled to the inner strap assembly and passing through the keeper tabs, the outer strap assembly including an adjustable strap, wherein the adjustment strap is adjustable to simultaneously adjust the position of the inner strap assembly relative to the wearer's foot to tighten or loosen the strap system.

18. (Withdrawn) A sandal strap system for securing a foot of a wearer to a running sandal having a midsole assembly with a foot supporting surface, the sandal strap system comprising:

- a strap keeper attached to the midsole assembly and positioned adjacent to the foot supporting surface;

an inner strap assembly comprising a heel strap, an instep strap, and a forefoot strap, wherein the inner strap assembly is fixed to the midsole assembly; and an adjustment strap attached to the heel strap, extending through the strap keeper, and connected to an adjustment member, wherein the adjustment strap is adjustable at the adjustment member to simultaneously adjust the position of the heel strap, the instep strap, and the forefoot strap relative to the wearer's foot to tighten or loosen the strap system.

19. (Withdrawn) The sandal strap system of claim 18 wherein the inner strap assembly is not independently adjustable.

20. (Withdrawn) The sandal strap system of claim 18 wherein adjusting the adjustment strap includes shortening or lengthening an effective length of the adjustment strap.

21. (Withdrawn) The sandal strap system of claim 18 wherein the adjustment strap fastens to itself using a hook and loop material after passing through the adjustment member.

22. (Withdrawn) A sandal strap system for securing a foot of a wearer to a sandal having a midsole assembly with a foot supporting surface, the foot having a heel area, an instep area, and a forefoot area, the sandal strap system comprising:

a heel strap coupled to the midsole and configured to engage the heel area of the wearer's foot;

an instep strap coupled to the midsole and configured to engage the instep area of the wearer's foot;

a forefoot strap coupled to the midsole and configured to engage the forefoot area of the wearer's foot; and

an adjustment strap attached to the heel strap, extending through the strap keeper and connected to an adjustment member, the adjustment strap being adjustable at the adjustment member to simultaneously adjust the position of the heel strap, the instep strap, and the forefoot strap relative to the wearer's foot to tighten or loosen the strap system.

23. (Withdrawn) The sandal strap system of claim 22 wherein the adjustment strap includes a releasable portion coupled to the instep strap.

24. (Withdrawn) The sandal strap system of claim 22 including a retention device coupled to the adjustment strap at the heel strap.

25. (Withdrawn) The sandal strap system of claim 22 including a retention device coupled to the adjustment strap at the forefoot strap.

26. (Withdrawn) A sandal strap system for securing a foot of a wearer to a running sandal having a midsole assembly with a foot supporting surface, the sandal strap system comprising:

- a strap keeper attached to the midsole assembly and positioned adjacent to the foot supporting surface;

- an inner strap assembly comprising a heel strap, a forefoot strap, and an instep strap, wherein the inner strap assembly is fixed to the midsole assembly and includes keeper tabs; and

- an outer strap assembly coupled to the inner strap assembly and passing through the keeper tabs, the outer strap assembly including an adjustable strap and an adjustment member, wherein the adjustment strap is adjustable at the adjustment member to simultaneously adjust the position of the inner strap assembly relative to the wearer's foot to tighten or loosen the strap system.